

**From class society to neoliberal mass society: Social and cultural transformations driven by Chilean neoliberalism**  
**De la sociedad de clases a la sociedad de masas neoliberal: Transformaciones sociales y culturales impulsadas por el neoliberalismo chileno**  
**Da sociedade de classes à sociedade de massas neoliberal: transformações sociais e culturais impulsionadas pelo neoliberalismo chileno**

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**Abstract**

This article presents a critical reflection on the formation of Chilean neoliberal society, employing the analytical categories of “spectacle” (Debord), “control” (Deleuze), and “masses” (Amorós). The aim is to conduct a longitudinal analysis of neoliberal transformations, articulating reflections on subjectivity, social control, and political culture. This analysis seeks to better define the specific mechanisms for producing social imaginaries and the production of desirability. By considering economic-legal, cultural, social, and political variables, we develop a referential analytical framework that aims to overcome the limitations of economistic and institutionalist interpretive frameworks, advancing toward a cultural and social characterization of what we call “neoliberal mass society”; that is to say, a mass society forged in the heat of capitalist spectacle and new forms of social control that emerged with democratic neoliberalism. By linking these political categories to specific historical processes in Chile, we aim not only to achieve a deeper and more complete characterization of the mechanisms of social control and production operating under neoliberal society -such as advertising, indebtedness, and precarity- but also to position and suggest this conceptual framework for its application to the realities of other Latin American countries that faced similar processes of the establishment of civic-military dictatorships and the neoliberalization of their societies.

**Keywords:** Chile, neoliberalism, class society, mass society, society of the spectacle, control societies, neoliberal mass society, cultural change, production of subjectivity, history of neoliberalism, critical sociology.

**Resumen**

En el siguiente artículo se desarrolla una reflexión crítica sobre la formación de la sociedad neoliberal chilena, a partir del uso de las categorías analíticas de “espectáculo” (Debord), de “control” (Deleuze) y de “masas” (Amorós), esto con el objetivo de realizar una lectura longitudinal de las transformaciones neoliberales, que articule reflexiones en torno a la subjetividad, el control social y la cultura política, para ayudar a definir mejor los mecanismos específicos de producción de los imaginarios sociales y de la producción de la deseabilidad. A partir de la consideración de variables económico-legales, culturales, sociales y políticas, desarrollamos un marco analítico referencial que pretende superar las limitaciones de los marcos interpretativos de corte economicista e institucionalista, para avanzar hacia la caracterización cultural y social de lo que denominamos “sociedad de masas neoliberal”; es decir, de una sociedad de masas que se ha forjado al calor del espectáculo capitalista y de nuevas formas de control social surgidas con el neoliberalismo democrático. Al vincular estas categorías políticas con procesos históricos específicos de la realidad chilena, pretendemos no solamente lograr una caracterización más profunda y completa de los mecanismos de control y producción social que operan bajo la sociedad neoliberal -como son la publicidad, el endeudamiento y la precarización-, sino que también posicionar y sugerir este marco conceptual para su aplicación sobre las realidades de otros países latinoamericanos que enfrentaron procesos similares de instalación de dictaduras cívico-militares y de procesos de neoliberalización de sus sociedades.

**Palabras clave:** Chile, neoliberalismo, sociedad de clases, sociedad de masas, sociedad del espectáculo, sociedades de control, sociedad de masas neoliberal, cambio cultural, producción de subjetividad, historia del neoliberalismo, sociología crítica.

## Resumo

Este artigo apresenta uma reflexão crítica sobre a formação da sociedade neoliberal chilena, empregando as categorias analíticas de “espetáculo” (Debord), “controle” (Deleuze) e “massas” (Amorós). O objetivo é realizar uma análise longitudinal das transformações neoliberais, articulando reflexões sobre subjetividade, controle social e cultura política. Essa análise busca definir melhor os mecanismos específicos de produção de imaginários sociais e de desejabilidade. Ao considerar variáveis econômico-jurídicas, culturais, sociais e políticas, desenvolvemos um arcabouço analítico referencial que visa superar as limitações dos arcabouços interpretativos economicistas e institucionalistas, avançando em direção a uma caracterização cultural e social do que denominamos “sociedade de massas neoliberal”; ou seja, uma sociedade de massas forjada no calor do espetáculo capitalista e em novas formas de controle social que emergiram com o neoliberalismo democrático. Ao vincular essas categorias políticas a processos históricos específicos no Chile, buscamos não apenas alcançar uma caracterização mais profunda e completa dos mecanismos de controle social e produção que operam sob a sociedade neoliberal -como a publicidade, o endividamento e a

precariedade-, mas também posicionar e sugerir esse arcabouço conceitual para sua aplicação às realidades de outros países latino-americanos que enfrentaram processos semelhantes de estabelecimento de ditaduras cívico-militares e neoliberalização de suas sociedades.

**Palavras-chave:** Chile, neoliberalismo, sociedade de classes, sociedade de massas, sociedade do espetáculo, sociedades de controle, sociedade de massas neoliberal, mudança cultural, produção da subjetividade, história do neoliberalismo, sociologia crítica.

## Introduction

The neoliberal system implemented during the dictatorship could never have been sustained overtime on the basis of pure repression, nor by the pure attraction of the market and consumer products, without also relying on the mass media, which allowed for the subjective mutation and transformation of society, adding a seductive connotation to the set of goods and preparing the ground for a self-understanding of social classes as neoliberal masses. It necessarily had to rely on hegemonic means of mass propaganda and political marketing that allowed it to develop a production of neoliberal subjectivities, with sufficient attraction to coerce and captivate society with its commercial spell. To this end, neoliberal society has deployed its media-cultural spectacle and social control to create the possibilities and expectations of the new consumerist society born of neoliberal capitalism, as a set of images of progress that drive citizens to consume their lifestyles. In other words, it creates and operates fundamental mechanisms to capture the desires and subjectivities of members of society, to make them susceptible to capitalist territorialisation, to an internalisation of the commercialised at the deepest level of people's mentality and social imagination, in order to ultimately produce public opinion that is relevant to the capitalist interests of the national oligarchy.

In this way, we can identify one of the central problems to be addressed as gaining a deeper understanding of the neoliberal mechanisms that operate both in the economic-social dimension and in the dimension of cultural production of collective and social imaginaries. To achieve our goal, we must break away from conventional characterisations of neoliberalism -such as those of an economicist and institutionalist nature- in order to establish an interdisciplinary dialogue between the social sciences dedicated to this type of study -such as historical sociology, cultural studies and political science- with the aim of revealing the specific mechanisms based on the production of spectacle, social control and the self-understanding of the masses. Obviously, with regard to these analytical fields, we wish to acknowledge and highlight the fundamental contributions made by Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle* (2005), Gilles Deleuze in *Postscript on Control Societies* (1990) and Miguel Amoros in the conference entitled *The Changes of Late Modernity* (2005). which we consider to be fundamental works for achieving a more defined interpretation of neoliberalism and for developing a longitudinal reading of the cultural and social transformations initiated under the

social regime of Chilean neoliberalism. In this way, we aim to link the philosophical categories developed by these authors -Debord's "spectacle," Deleuze's "control," and Amoros' "masses"- with the specific historical processes that have unfolded in Chile since the institutionalisation of neoliberalism began in 1977, was enacted with the 1980 Constitution, and consolidated during the transition to democracy (from the return to democracy to the present day).

In this way, the categories developed by Debord, Deleuze, and Amoros will serve as a theoretical framework that will allow us to approach and describe the functioning of these neoliberal mechanisms in the Chilean reality. While the analytical category of "spectacle" allows us to approach the new forms of dominant neoliberal culture, that of "control" allows us to recognise the novel social conditioning to which neoliberal citizens and workers are subjected. At the same time, the conditions created by the spectacle and neoliberal control allow us to explain the production and self-understanding of social classes as a neoliberal mass society.

In order to develop an appropriate method of study and analysis, we must first recognise the variables that push us to develop a critical analysis of the social and cultural transformations initiated in the Chilean region under neoliberalism.

(a) Economic and legal variables: the 1980 Constitution (Ministerio del Interior, 1980), which implicitly establishes in Article 1 that economic assistance to the poor and marginalised sectors of society who need it is not permitted, under the pretext of non-intervention by the state in favour of a particular group in society, while recognising, on the other hand, the promotion and subsidisation of commercial associations, as these are considered intermediate groups that are eligible for economic policy support. (Cea, 2002, p. 184). Decree Law No. 2756 of 1979 (1987) was also enacted, establishing new and important rules on trade union organisation by promoting freedom of union membership or disaffiliation (Title I, 4.), the depoliticisation of trade unions and their strictly economic orientation (Title I, 7.), trade union atomisation (Title I, Art. 1), and by limiting collective bargaining to company unions (Title I, Art. 6). The content of this decree was later absorbed, arranged and reintroduced in the Labour Code of 1987 and 1994 (2025), as expressed in the Preliminary Title (Art. 3) and in Title I On Trade Union Organisations (Chapter 1, Art. 202). In addition, we must consider the poor performance of the AFP system in providing decent pensions and its reverse function as the main mechanism for neoliberal capital investment in the country (Jimenez-Yáñez, 2020).

(b) Cultural variables: the social gap recognisable through the Chilean education system, which, according to the results of the Higher Education Entrance Exam, 2024, continues to repeat the same unequal results of previous decades (within the top 20% nationally, 61.3% of students come from private fee-paying schools, while 16.8% come from subsidised schools, and only 9.5% come from public schools), reflecting the system's inequality in access to culture (Bascur, 2025); as well as the

development of the centrality of consumption in culture and advertising investment, which doubled during the 1990s; along with the expansion of credit and its flip side, the structural indebtedness of Chilean society {Ruiz-Tagle et al., 2013}. in which household debt has remained constant, at least from 2014 to 2024, when it reached 48.1%.

(c) Social variables: precariousness and rising cost of living, to the point that Chile is considered the most expensive country in Latin America in terms of the cost of public services, with one of the most expensive higher education systems in the world, and with the highest prices in Latin America for medicines, being the second most expensive country in the region for petrol and the third with the highest VAT in the entire American continent (Jiménez-Yáñez, 2020). We must also consider in this variable the social protest movements that developed from 2000 onwards: the mochilazo of 2001, the anti-globalisation and anti-APEC movement of 2004, the secondary-penguin movement of 2006, against the extractivism of Hidroaysen in 2011, the secondary and university student movement of 2011, the feminist and Niunamenos movement that flourished between 2016 and 2018 (Gomez-Leyton, 2010. pp. 371, 374-376. 388-389, 400; 2020); and the street protests that developed in response to the murder of Camilo Catrillanca in La Araucania in 2018, which to a certain extent anticipated the scope of the collective movement that would develop during the outbreak.

(d) Political variables: the rejection and discrediting of politics, politicians and political parties due to cases of corruption: the MOP-GATE, Penta, Soquimich and Caval cases, and cases of collusion involving pharmacies, shipping companies, toilet paper, chicken and nappies. (Jiménez-Yáñez, 2020).

Considering these economic-legal, cultural, social, and political variables helps us to better define and explain our choice of study method, which, as we mentioned earlier, will consist of a critical longitudinal reading of the framework of these variables, based on the exploratory concepts of "spectacle," social "control" and "mass society", working largely counter-inductively in relation to economicist and institutionalist hypotheses, in order to obtain information and results that could not otherwise be achieved (Feyerabend, 1986, chap. 3), with the aim of producing a more specific and complete characterisation of neoliberal mass society and its social and cultural dynamics. The aim is to link these important philosophical categories with the interpretation of the specific historical processes of neoliberalism in the Chilean region, with the projection that this set of categories can be integrated into a research programme on Chilean neoliberalism, to be applied to the broader study of its social and cultural transformations, as well as other realities in Latin America that underwent similar processes of civil-military dictatorships and a subsequent opening up to the neoliberalisation of their societies.

Thus, we will first delve into the use of Debord's category of "spectacle," then focus on Deleuze's category of "control," and finally conclude with the application of Amoros' category of "masses." Along

with the results that are presented, we will offer some final reflections on the possibilities for liberation within Chilean neoliberal mass society.

### **The military dictatorship and the concentrated neoliberal spectacle (1973-1990)**

Following Guy Debord's (2005) analysis of the development of spectacle culture in dictatorial societies, we can highlight some initial elements of the form of capitalist spectacle that emerged under the initial historical conditions of neoliberalism in Chile:

The dictatorship of the bureaucratic economy cannot leave the exploited masses any significant margin of choice, since it has had to choose everything for itself, and any other external choice, whether it concerns food or music, is therefore already the choice of its total destruction. It must be accompanied by permanent violence. The composite image of good, in its spectacle, encompasses the totality of what officially exists and is normally concentrated in a single man, who is the guarantor of its totalitarian cohesion. Everyone must magically identify with this absolute star, who is, in fact, the primitive accumulation accelerated by terror. (...) where the concentrated spectacular dominates, the police also dominate. (Debord, 2005, p. 18).

The forms of capitalist spectacle during the dictatorship focused on creating and projecting the image of the world that the military and civilian representatives of the military dictatorship wished to present. Restricting political and artistic freedoms to the point of suppressing them in order to leave all cultural production in the hands of the dominant agents within the military regime. Political propaganda was encouraged through state terrorism, which prepared the social space by eliminating and prohibiting any possibility of political and cultural divergence, under the pretext of eradicating the danger posed by terrorism and Marxist influence on Chilean society.

The dictatorship established its own spectacle based on a discourse and aesthetic of uniformity, order, and discipline, where these aspects were to encompass, occupy, and colonise previously unthinkable spaces. An example of this was the development of a "yellow" trade union movement promoted by the military dictatorship itself, a kind of show of trade unionism in order. They did so by deploying apparatus for the production of subjectivity in all social orders, and some of these mechanisms or tactics of uniform power have even been defended to this day as valid methods of government among the most conservative, albeit minority, sectors of society. The promotion and acceptance of this spectacular form by the population has also taken advantage of the conditions of permanent surveillance by a police state to persuade, by reason or force, the acceptance of this spectacular form based on order, discipline and cultural uniformity.

Obviously, this spectacle had its favourite star, its symbolic concentration in the figure of the dictator

Pinochet, who gradually stood out above the other members of the Junta and developed leadership and absolute control of the process, after consolidating his position as leader of the coup group. At the same time, he came to be considered the symbol guaranteeing authoritarian cohesion, order and governmental power, becoming an icon of identification with the military regime itself in all its expressions.

### **Authoritarian democracy and the spectacle of diffuse character (1990-present)**

The dictatorship was a show that gradually, over 17 years, discouraged even the most enthusiastic ultra-liberals -considering that it was the military government that achieved the miracle of mercantilist refoundation without opposition- thanks to the implementation of radical neoliberal reforms. The type of concentrated cultural spectacle of the dictatorship no longer fit with the model of structures open to business and transnational corporations that shaped the new neoliberal market, and therefore could no longer be sustained over time under an openly dictatorial system. There was no desire to risk the model to a popular uprising that could completely undermine efforts to install the new oligarchic institutional framework.

Thus, the grey image of the dictatorial spectacle gradually gave way to a more colourful, carnivalesque and pompous scene that escaped the narrow aesthetic conceptions of uniformity, order and discipline -and, we might add. of unproductivity, decadence and mediocrity- established during the totalitarian-authoritarian period of the concentrated spectacle. In contrast, with the new form of authoritarian democracy, strict social discipline was loosened to a certain degree and public space was opened up for the consumption of multiple goods and ways of life, for the construction of desirable subjects belonging to communities imagined by advertising, often contradictory, antagonistic and complementary in their relationship with other multiple artificial paradises, arranged by the new neoliberal cultural spectacle. And instead of reproducing the emblematic image of a single central sovereign man, the great star who territorialises all social spaces with his sublime and pathetic presence, imprinting his aesthetics of uniformity, order and discipline, space was opened up for the irruption of the multitudinous carnival of adorable and consumable stars, who fill television spaces with their image and compete for popular adoration, projected as a set of role models, each consumable as prefabricated products of life, masks, drivers of consumption of "dream" lives, where there is a different star attached to each commodity, to supply each particular and "special" desire, to satisfy even the most exotic tastes, as long as these desires can be sold, bought and consumed.

A different form of open spectacle came about, under a diffuse expression, that is, under the advertising form of a set of goods and commercial services:

The diffuse spectacle accompanies the abundance of goods, the undisturbed development of modern capitalism. Here, each commodity is justified separately in the name of the greatness

of the total production of objects, of which the spectacle is the apologetic catalogue. Irreconcilable assertions compete on the stage of the unified spectacle of the abundant economy, just as the different star commodities simultaneously uphold their contradictory projects for the organisation of society; where the spectacle of cars requires perfect circulation that destroys old cities, the spectacle of the city itself in turn needs museum neighbourhoods. Consequently, the already problematic satisfaction attributed to consumption as a whole is immediately falsified, since the real consumer can only directly touch a succession of fragments of this commercial happiness, fragments in which the quality attributed to the whole is always conspicuously absent. (Debord, 2005, p. 18).

It is important to note that the consumption of goods similarly encompasses the consumption of images of progress, attached to the many "stars" linked to the material consumption of products. This irremediable separation between the 'use value' (material satisfaction) and the 'exchange value' of the commodity (the social surplus of enjoyment, connotation, symbolic or emblematic satisfaction) provides incomplete and limited satisfaction to people, who can never symbolically satisfy the demands of their material desires. The image of what they consume constantly replaces actual consumption. And this symbolic consumption holds the broken promise of the satisfaction of a desire, but with the bitter taste of displeasure produced by the postponement of the completeness of material pleasure. In this game, the constant dissemination of new images of progress renders previous productions obsolete and replaces them in value; as is also typically the case, for example, with the problem of satisfaction in credit purchases, which, through the extension of debt, leads to the displacement of ownership of a product that is consumed, without any real ownership of what is consumed (Foa y Magrin, 2019; Peskin, 2023, p. 178; Valsega-Piazza, 2025, pp. 166,170).

Cultural neoliberalism is a strange regime, because although in its "democratic" stage the spectacle moves from being "concentrated" to "diffuse," this movement is only a continuation and more technically advanced evolution of a previous spectacular form. This modernisation of its resources and mechanisms is achieved through massive imports and the new possibilities for abundant consumption of goods that have opened up with globalisation. In this way, an open regime of capitalist competition is produced that captures and produces a controlled social subjectivity, which in political terms manifests itself as a theatre or political simulacrum that operates with its own show of popular elections.

In the unfolding of these new conditions of diffuse spectacle, no substantial or structural reforms to the institutional and economic system are developed, but rather the same principles established by the dictatorship (i.e., the Constitution and Labour Laws) are reaffirmed and strengthened, but now cloaked in democratic codes and symbolic coordinates, within the framework of a market open to conditions of hegemony established by commercial monopolies. Democracy and its "intangible", "symbolic" legal

transformation of the dictatorship is another cultural mask and spectacular expression of an apparent change in everything, but which in reality or in depth does not change anything substantial. Part of this spectacular mechanism consists of the introduction of an advertising and communication strategy that aims to alter superficially what is not structurally touched. This gave new impetus to neoliberalism in conditions that allowed for greater commercial development, now under the guise of a democratic, open and diffuse model that encourages a consumerist lifestyle of goods and debt more than during the dictatorship.

### **The transition from traditional disciplinary society to neoliberal control society**

From the perspective of the development of social control under neoliberalism, we must recognise the transition from a traditional Chilean society determined by social disciplines {whose existence we clearly recognised during the initial dictatorial period of neoliberalism, permeated by the aesthetic ideals of uniformity and a homogeneous cultural order imposed on the civilian population} to a society determined by a new type of domination based on open control. From a form of neoliberalism based on control that does not allow choice, we are gradually moving towards a form that allows choice in a controlled manner. This process of transformation in contemporary societies has been clearly explained by Gilles Deleuze in a famous but brief article entitled *Postscript on Control Societies*:

We are facing a generalised crisis of all places of confinement: prison, hospital, factory, school, family. (...) everyone knows that these institutions are finished, in the more or less short term. It is only a matter of managing their agony and keeping people busy until the new forces that are knocking at the door are in place. It is control societies that are replacing disciplinary societies. "Control" is the name Burroughs proposes to designate the new monster, which Foucault recognised as our near future. Paul Virilio continues to analyse the ultra-fast forms of outdoor control that are replacing the old disciplines that operate within a closed system. (Deleuze, 1990, p. 1).

Our current democratic society of control clearly possesses several of the characteristics described in relation to the emergence of this type of society. Clearly, the end of dictatorship is closely linked to the exhaustion and decline of disciplinary institutions and mechanisms of persecution and imprisonment, with their consequent transformation into new open-air control apparatuses. We are referring to forms as diverse as the control of desires, subjectivity and personal opinion, the control of access to institutions, the control of urban spaces, the passage from one segment of the city to another divided by tolls, permanent surveillance in the streets, the promise of credit and surveillance for indebtedness, and the permanent observation of the population in real time through cameras, among other means of mass control, such as social manipulation through the production of public opinion conjured up by the mass media (such as television, morning shows, news programmes, radio and the press).

In order to control public opinion and the voting masses, extensive use is made of personal information collected through computers, mobile phones and social networks; this is so that companies can influence personal and public opinion, and also to properly target advertising towards the consumption of goods. (Uriarte, 2010) A whole set of technological means of power are available for capturing desires and producing controlled subjectivities.

Currently, an important mechanism of social control has been created, which is applied to neoliberal workers through so-called "modular wages" (Deleuze, 1990). The volatility of neoliberal wages is a fundamental characteristic of the control society that began to develop in Chile after the end of the dictatorship. Historically, under the disciplinary society, workers had their wages guaranteed according to the payment of a minimum wage, a specific rate. However, since the introduction of modular wages, employers' control over workers has exceeded traditional limits, as wages are used to control the free movement of workers and their actions by making part of their wages conditional on the payment of bonuses for attendance, punctuality, production, among others.

In this way, the conditionality of a significant percentage of wages helps to develop a form of employer control that extends beyond the workplace itself, imposing restrictions on workers' schedules and lives outside of work, under the task and requirement of fulfilling a series of commitments to the company and generating relevant ideas to improve production and thereby increase the value of wages. It is no longer a question of the old control and direct supervision of the worker within the company, but rather of self-control that extends to the free space of the street, transport, the home, and the time outside of work itself, which from this point of view is organised according to business interests, determined by new forms of immaterial labour. (Lazzarato and Negri, 2001)

In this sense, the information and results obtained during the business evaluation are what determine the value of modular wages: "(...) control societies operate on machines of a third type, computer machines and computers whose passive danger is noise and whose active danger is piracy or the introduction of a virus. It is a technological evolution but, more profoundly, a mutation of capitalism." (Deleuze, 1990, p. 2)

Another profound transformation is the shift from a production-based economy to a consumer-based one. Consumerism is inscribed on the economic basis of capitalist overproduction, which is what really allows it to focus on sales rather than production:

As for the market. (...) capitalism is no longer based on production, which is often relegated to the periphery of the Third World, even in complex forms such as textiles, metallurgy or oil. It is a capitalism of overproduction. It no longer buys raw materials and sells finished products: it buys finished products or assembles parts. What it wants to buy are shares. It is no longer capitalism for production, but for the product, that is, for sales and for the market. (Deleuze,

1990, p. 2)

Chile has undergone a process similar to that described above, where, already under dictatorship, it abandoned its position of developing a productivist path and turned to the practice of buying finished products, that is, imports. (Ffrench-Davis. 2017)

We must highlight the importance of advertising and marketing in the context of the transformations described above, since in control societies they act with the aim of producing consumer desires, instilling the desire to purchase, so that consumers can yearn for spectacular consumable lifestyles. And the trap consists of articulating this device of power with an entire system of ad hoc credit, that is, with a system of indebtedness:

Marketing is now the instrument of social control, and it shapes the shameless race of our masters. Control is short-term and fast-moving, but also continuous and unlimited, whereas discipline was long-lasting, infinite and discontinuous. Man is no longer the imprisoned man, but the indebted man. (Deleuze, 1990, p. 2)

This feature is clearly evident in Chilean society, considering that the debt ratio of citizens has grown significantly since the return to democracy until now, reaching a historic debt equivalent to 73.3% of disposable income in 2019 (CNN Chile, 2019).

To conclude the application of the category of social control to the Chilean reality, we must present one last assessment by Deleuze on control societies, which we believe is important to highlight:

(...) the different control apparatuses are inseparable variations that form a system of variable geometry (...). Controls are modulations, like a self-deforming mould that would change continuously from one moment to the next", "(...) in control societies, nothing is ever finished: the company, training, service are the metastable and coexisting states of the same modulation, like a universal deformer. (Deleuze, 1990, p. 2).

This conceptualisation of the devices of power and social control, which conceive of them as a universal deformer, is extremely useful for understanding the more obscurantist functions of neoliberalism, which tend to encourage and manage the decline of its social institutions: the family, the hospital, the school, the prison, factories, among others. Below, we present some situations conjured up within neoliberal society that we consider to be clear examples of social control and manipulation, in the sense of operations of power that act as universal deformers of social institutions:

-The penetration of drugs into populations under the context of the neoliberal military dictatorship, to disorganise the inhabitants (Osses and Henriquez, 2005).

- The normalisation of a precarious and deficient education system (Villalobos and Quaresma, 2015) and public health system (Goic, 2015).
- The debt system as a means of acquiring and consuming products. (Lemus and Pulgar, 2023) -New technified forms of surplus value extraction that affect wages (AFP and application of modular wages) to generate higher corporate revenues (Galvez and Kremerman, 2019).
- The development of public spaces under private control and the production of the neoliberal city (Duhau, 2001; Amoros, 2012).
- The neoliberal constitution and the system of liberal laws as distorters of the concepts of work, law, unionisation, and the idea of preserving the common good (Cea, 2002, p. 186) and the distortion of the concept of collective property.
- Distortion of the social or welfare state through the privatisation of public companies; private control of institutions responsible for promoting social welfare and the commercialisation of their objectives: housing, food, education, and health (Monckeberg, 2001). Rights converted into a mere ability to demand products and services.
- In economics: ideological and material distortion of the concept of the "free market" and subordination of the market to the interests of large capital monopolies (accumulation of new wealth) (Fazio, 1997; 2023).
- Deformation of the labour system: artificial creation of a natural unemployment rate under dictatorship (Llanos, 2018), with the aim of artificially stabilising wage prices, distorting and limiting collective bargaining processes, and developing an anti-worker Labour Code (Lopez et al., 2015, p. 15).
- Distortion of the truth or twisting of the ethical statute of truthfulness by the mass media and the news (Salinas and Cabalin, 2019). Opinion surpassing and supplanting scientific knowledge and expertise: application of Goebbels' principles of political marketing; use of newspeak to distort the common meaning of things and cause confusion; establishment of the fallacy of political objectivity in news reports; and distorted interpretations of social protests by official and private media outlets.
- Development of a neoliberal environmentalism that hands over control of the exploitation of natural reserves to private interests, while privileging the capitalist exploitation of the land without considering negative externalities, over the interests of local and regional populations (Sato, 2020).
- Deformation of industrial production, turning it into an unbridled system of consumption of imported goods (Salazar and Pinto, 2014, pp. 86-87; Ministerio de Economía, Fomento y Turismo, 2014).

-Deformation of citizen political participation on the basis of its delimitation under the political party system (limiting citizen participation to elections). Formation of corporate political financing networks (Matamala, 2015; Vera, 2016).

-Distortion of the concept and identification of freedom, due to its instrumental reduction to the freedom to buy and sell, to consume (Ferrajoli, 2008).

-Distortion of equality under a system that applies the same rights to a diverse set of realities, without ensuring basic equality of conditions and opportunities, or the application of distributive justice (Candia et al., 2021).

-Distortion of the solidarity system under individual capitalisation formulas (AFP) (Fundacion Sol, 2020).

-Deformation of personality and local culture through the introduction and supply of desirable products and artificial paradises: having and consuming products in order to be, rather than being based on authenticity and locality; having money or seeking beauty in order to be socially accepted (Fromm, 2011).

-Deformation of social relations through their com modification and privatisation, according to selfish individual materialistic interests (Boito, 2020).

### **The situation of the Chilean working class under neoliberalism: the transition from a class society to a neoliberal mass society**

In class society, the economy predominated over everything else and the exchange of goods was considered the social activity par excellence. The main productive force was labour, which is why the labour movement was a necessary factor in social transformation. In mass society, technology dominates and the determining social activities are circulation and consumption. The main productive force in automated production is machines, so the potential for transformation lies in scientific and technical knowledge. The labour movement either does not exist or is irrelevant. (Amoros, 2005, p. 1).

It is impossible to remain indifferent to these harsh words from the Valencian anarchist historian Miguel Amoros, because they undoubtedly reflect the weakened state of the labour movement within contemporary capitalist societies. In our opinion, he describes the process by which class society has been transformed into a true mass society. In other words, the working class itself and its revolutionary potential have been emptied and turned into inert and infertile neoliberal masses.

We are talking about the production of the neoliberal worker, who first identifies with the masses and

capitalist spectacle, rather than identifying with the class or social stratum to which he belongs. This subjective distortion has led to a brutal process of qualitative change in society that has enabled other structural transformations, including some that we have already outlined above, along with new interpretations that seem to better define the phenomena occurring today, as pointed out by Amoros (2005, p. 1): the emergence of a society in post-industrial and post-modern conditions; the consumer society since the 1970s; Guy Debord's society of the spectacle; Jacques Ellul's technological society; Deleuze's society of control; and among them, Ortega y Gasset's particular mass society, which is a topic he treats with great interest (Amoros, 2005):

The masses belong to a world unified by spectacle, constituting shapeless aggregates, without ties, without roots, without experience and without their own means. The individuals who compose them are isolated, they do not count for themselves but for their number, so they are all interchangeable. Mass society was born from the dissolution of class society. (Amoros, 2005, p. 2).

However, a decisive factor in this process of transforming the working class into a mindless mass is the position of specialisation in leadership that the ruling class has developed:

The ruling class is the ruling oligarchy, a hierarchical and mobile conglomerate of executive politicians and experts; the rest are led masses (...) The masses, threatened by boredom, loneliness and exclusion, are a historical product, but not a subject. They have nothing but their private lives; their desires are economic objectives and are therefore manipulated and exploited. (Amoros, 2005, p. 2).

It was the military dictatorship and the installation of Chilean neoliberalism that made possible the transition from a class society to a mass society {a process that runs more or less parallel to the transition from a disciplinary society to a control society and from a concentrated to a diffuse society of spectacle). Under these social conditions, the productive force of labour has already been replaced by automated production or directly commercialised and imported from other countries. The role played by the labour movement in the revolutionary potential of society has been transformed and reduced under the conditions imposed by mass society, which instead finds itself entrusting its hopes for change to the world of capitalist spectacle, dissolving the traditional ideological means that intertwined and led it from the objective material conditions of the working class to its subjective self-understanding. That path leading to class consciousness has been undermined, distorted and supplanted by a market of spectacular images of progress, by longed-for apothecotic worlds that lead to the miserable, precarious material niches of the capitalist market.

The ties that bound individuals, under class society, to their locality or to their identification with the working class, have been replaced by consumable lifestyles and fashions, and by communities

imagined by advertisers. The poor person is no longer subjugated and beset from outside by the economic system -causing a defensive retreat into their class- but rather is stimulated and goaded by consumerism to be drawn out of the concrete sphere of their existence and production, to be linked and captured by commodified lifestyles, and dragged into the cultural system by political and economic marketing, with the aim of severing people's ties to their local and class identity, thus producing them under the new characteristics of the neoliberal masses.

Another important characteristic, pointed out by Amorós, relates to the psychology of the proletarian masses:

The masses are incapable of remaining united for long behind someone or something. By losing the ability to reason, they have lost the ability to be manipulated by discourse. This does not mean, as the proliferation of religions demonstrates, that they cannot be manipulated in other ways, for example, through desire, feeling or fear, and that they cannot be controlled through technovigilance and a supplement of prison. The 'minimal' state of globalisation is the penal state. (Amorós, 2005, p. 2).

The situation of the working class has been transformed and distorted by neoliberalism to the point that proletarian subjectivity has been radically mediated, captured and codified through the installation of the desire to consume goods and prefabricated lifestyles. The spectacular forms advertised under the neoliberal system appeal directly to the capture of desire, the production of virtual community feelings and subjective control through manipulation, confusion and fear (Iglesias et al., 2014, p. 189) spread through the mass media.

### **Possibilities for liberation within neoliberal mass society**

Finally, we must address the issue of the possibilities for liberation of the masses from the structural capitalist conditions described above. Are there possibilities for the reorganisation of a social movement that could threaten the neoliberal regime?

The establishment of opaque defence zones within them by the rebel survivors is a pressing necessity, since for spectacular domination these constitute an "anti-system" reserve of "enemies". They must form a kind of society within a society, governed by the old values of friendship, solidarity and freedom. In it, experience and memory must be safeguarded, maintaining an underground historical consciousness that must come to light when the nihilism of the masses calls for it. Internally, the resisters must cultivate community values, but externally they must remain totally negative. To change mass society, it must first be destroyed. Destruction begins with the disruption of the globalised economy. The revolutionary strategy must begin not with a general strike, but with a blockade of traffic. The

first targets to be occupied should not be workplaces, but motorways, trains and ports. (Amoros, 2005, p. 2).

Amoros is undoubtedly outlining to a large extent the current tasks of the autonomous and countercultural anarchist movement under neoliberal conditions, which would later be put to the test in Chile during the 2019 uprising.

The possibilities for liberation within a society of mass control have to do with the possibility of building counter-hegemonic organisation and resistance, which can build bridges to the consciousness and lost historical memory of the working classes, in order to produce the organisations based on friendship, solidarity and freedom that Amoros points out, guided by the knowledge of the historical content of social struggles. The social uprising of October 2019 itself led to a phenomenon of social rupture against the neoliberal society of control, spectacle and masses, provoking the emergence of a true mass nihilism, at the height of the spectacular consolidation of neoliberalism in Chile, a situation that expressed a true rejection and loss of control by the culture of spectacle over desires; or in other words, over the subjectivity of the individuals who make up the working class, which replaced its neoliberal desire with a revolutionary desire for transformation and social change.

This social phenomenon of 2019 resonated strongly with young people, not with the period immediately preceding theirs -with the dictatorial past-, but rather -in a kind of renaissance of revolutionary ideas- with the more distant past of the traditions of revolutionary socialism and anarchism, that is, with the traditional currents of critical thought developed within the working class (Gómez-Leyton, 2020).

The necessary scenario described by Amoros, to break away from the masses, coincides with the Chilean experience and with the events that occurred during the social uprising. During this experience, two sets of important events took place that we would like to highlight preliminarily:

(1) The development of popular expressions of social organisation, territorial control and the development of community and territorial assemblies (Acontratiempo, 2020, pp. 29-31, 35, 41-42, 45, 49-50, 54, 59, 61). This means the creation of societies of resistance within and against neoliberal society, where processes of individual and community development took place (with the consequent development of social ethics and the values of friendship, solidarity and non-alienated freedom), as well as the rescue, preservation and transmission of memory and historical experiences to new generations, together with the restoration of underground historical consciousness and community and local values. However, it should be critically noted that these social and organisational phenomena were skilfully redirected by neoliberal politics from the demobilisation to the disorganisation of the social movement.

(2) Destruction of the logic of the totalitarian city, that is, the breakdown of the striated space organised by the capitalist state. The popular response to the neoliberal system led to the systematic interruption of the normalised development process of capitalism in the Chilean region. These actions involved blocking the movement of goods, capital and people in various regions of the country, with the occupation of motorways and the destruction of toll booths, the paralysis of the metro and transport services, among other blockades throughout the Chilean region, as well as the occupation of streets, squares and avenues in the country's main cities and ports. Constant mobilisation of the population caused disruptions and paralysed the main neoliberal routes that feed the system.

## Conclusions

This exploration of Chilean neoliberalism using the categories of "spectacle," "control," and "masses" has allowed us to examine at least three major social and cultural transformations that occurred as a result of the establishment of neoliberal society and that currently act in a juxtaposed and articulated manner:

1. We have examined the transition from a neoliberal society that reproduced concentrated and block forms of spectacle during the dictatorship to diffuse and advertising forms of spectacle under the new authoritarian neoliberal democracy.
2. We examined the transition from the disciplinary neoliberal society characteristic of the dictatorship to the neoliberal society of control, with its new forms of coercion and control in the open.
3. Finally, we point to the transition from a self-understanding of class society to an identification with mass society, and we have noted some preliminary aspects of its possibilities for transformation.

These identified historical processes form part of our characterisation of the cultural and social transformations experienced by Chilean society, and can be summarised as follows:

4. Given the combined formula of these transformations, we can conclude that, during the development of Chilean neoliberalism, *we have moved from a disciplinary capitalist class society with a concentrated form of spectacle during the Chilean civil-military dictatorship to a capitalist society of mass control with a diffuse form of spectacle under a system of authoritarian neoliberal democracy.* This social and cultural mutation of Chilean society implies a series of new conditions that citizens and workers in the Chilean region must face, which we have already described in greater depth throughout this article, under our analysis of the spectacle and the new social control initiated by Chilean neoliberalism.

We hope that this proposed framework for analysis can be further developed, criticised and expanded upon, if deemed necessary, and replicated and applied to other Latin American realities that have

undergone similar processes of neoliberalisation, in order to achieve counterpoints and highlight the contrasts between the various historical processes in the region and their diverse evolutions in terms of the deployment or withdrawal of these recognised social and cultural factors.

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